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Life-Threatening Cold Air to Grip Wisconsin **State agencies team up to warn residents**

(MADISON) – Wisconsin needs to be ready for a dangerous blast of arctic air that will be moving into the state Sunday night and hovering over through Tuesday. The system will drop temperatures and wind chills to levels not seen since 1996, causing potentially life threatening conditions.

The Departments of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), Health Services (DHS) and ReadyWisconsin are teaming up to warn people about the upcoming bitter weather and precautions you and your family should take.

Forecast – The National Weather Service says cold air will begin pouring into Wisconsin Saturday night and into Sunday. The coldest stretch will be Sunday night through Tuesday. Meteorologists are predicting lows Sunday night of -10 to -25 with wind chills at -30 to -40. Monday, highs will reach only -5 to -15 with wind chills remaining in the -30 to -40 danger zone.

Health Risks – With these bitter temperatures, beware of hypothermia and frostbite.

Frostbite can occur on exposed skin in less than 10 minutes. Symptoms include a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in fingers, toes, ear tips and tip of the nose. Limit your time outside. If you see these signs, seek medical care immediately!

Signs of hypothermia include shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech and drowsiness in adults and children. In infants, symptoms can include bright red or cold skin and very low energy. If you notice anyone exhibiting any of the symptoms of hypothermia, seek medical care immediately!

Carbon Monoxide Danger - Carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States. Breathing carbon monoxide displaces the oxygen in the blood and can cause death within minutes at high levels. Symptoms of overexposure to carbon monoxide are often mistaken for the flu and include headaches, fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath/chest pain, nausea/vomiting, and confusion. If you or someone you know experience any of these symptoms, or your carbon monoxide detector sounds an alarm, head outside immediately for fresh air and call 911.

“No doubt furnaces, fireplaces, wood stoves, and other home heating devices will be working overtime during these extremely cold temperatures and that can increase the risk for carbon monoxide poisoning,” said Karen McKeown, State Health Officer.

Never run a gasoline or propane heater or a grill (gas or charcoal) inside your home or an unventilated garage. Any heating system that burns fuel will produce carbon monoxide. Never run a car in an enclosed space. If a vehicle is running, you must have a door open to the outside. Generators should be run a safe distance from the home. Never run a generator in the home or garage, or right next to windows or doors. Make sure you have a working carbon monoxide detector.

Pet Precautions - While our pets might seem to have built-in, warm winter coats, they too are sensitive to the elements. It is recommended to bring them indoors during this bitter weather. Dogs and cats can get frost bitten ears, nose and feet if left outside during bitter cold weather. Chemicals used to melt snow and ice can also irritate pets' paws - be sure to keep anti-freeze, salt and other poisons away from pets.

Cats sometimes crawl under cars and into the engine compartment, seeking shelter and warmth. Bang on the hood before starting the car on cold days to startle sleeping animals. And remember, just as cars heat to oven temperature in summer, they can be equally deadly in winter when they turn into freezers. Don't leave your pet alone in a vehicle. It may freeze to death.

Livestock Precautions - Animals can suffer from hypothermia, frostbite and other cold weather injuries. Harsh conditions weaken their immune systems and open the door to illness. Calves and swine are especially susceptible to cold. Make sure animals have a place to get out of the wind, even if it is just a windbreak or a three-sided shelter. Also provide dry bedding to protect them from frostbite. Animals also burn extra calories to keep warm in severe cold. They also need access to fresh water – not frozen streams or snow. Stock tank heaters and frost-proof watering devices will ensure that livestock get enough to drink.

“Livestock owners need to provide extra nutrition, plenty of good bedding, and protection from winds and moisture,” says state humane veterinarian Dr. Yvonne Bellay. “Calves often have undetected pneumonia that kills quickly when the temperature drops. Be particularly careful with animals that have recently been brought here from a warmer climate or that have been indoors and are now outdoors. If they're not acclimated, they'll suffer more winter illness.”

On the road - If you are traveling make sure you have a winter emergency kit in your vehicle. Items to include in the kit are candles and matches, a flashlight, pocket knife, snacks, a cell phone adapter, a blanket and extra clothing. Also check with 511WI for road conditions.

For additional information go to:

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov>

<http://datcp.wi.gov/>

<http://readywisconsin.wi.gov>